DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 013 PS 025 648

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TITLE Early Childhood Report Study. Report No. 1.
INSTITUTION Alaska State Dept. of Education, Juneau.; Alaska Univ., Fairbanks.
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 30p.; Report prepared for the Tri-Department on Early Childhood.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Cultural Background; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Needs; *Educational Policy; Employed Parents; Parent Participation; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Special Education; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Alaska; *Program Characteristics

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine demographic characteristics of existing early childhood education programs in Alaska. The survey was completed by 152 certified preschool programs and licensed out-of-home child care centers, representing 6,601 children and 1,093 staff members. Data were tabulated for questionnaire responses on children's backgrounds, program history and demographics, staff members, teacher education, planned activities, and parent participation. The most notable feature of early childhood programs in Alaska was found to be the diversity in the programs. A need for additional resources was also noted. The design of child care programs appeared more likely to meet the needs of working parents than the design of preschool programs, and parents with children with special needs were likely to have difficulty finding appropriate placements for their children. Programs were designing their own staff development and training activities to fill in the gaps in higher education programs. The notable variety of programs suggest that public policy needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the diversity found within the state. (The Early Childhood Program Survey Questionnaire is appended.) (JPB)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD REPORT STUDY

of 261 certified pre-school and licensed child care centers, 175 responded 60%

REPORT NO. 1

BY
Barbara Harrison and John Revells,
College of Human and Rural Development,
University of Alaska—Fairbanks

with support from the
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JULY 1986

A Report Prepared For
The Tri-Department Committee On Early Childhood

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Origin of the Study

In March 1984, Harold Raynolds, Alaska Commissioner of Education, met with faculty in the Education Department of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. During the meeting, Raynolds requested the assistance of the University in conducting research relating to early childhood programs in Alaska.

In August 1984, Annie Calkins, Early Childhood Education Specialist for the Alaska State Department of Education, organized a meeting in Juneau which included representatives from the State Departments of Education, Community and Regional Affairs, Health and Social Services, the three main branches of the University of Alaska, the Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children, the Early Childhood Coordination Project, and the Preschool Incentive Grant. David Weikart, Executive Director of the nationally known High-Scope Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan had been invited to attend and facilitate a portion of the meeting.

The purpose of the session was to outline a research agenda which would provide needed information to program planners and policy makers for early childhood programs throughout the state. Participants in the meeting agreed that basic descriptive information was needed as a first step. The highest research priorities for those attending the meeting included the collection of demographic information on early childhood programs in Alaska in the mid-1980s and the collection of previously published reports on children and programs in Alaska. By the end of the three day intensive meeting, those in attendance had generally agreed on three research activities which they would collaboratively support over the following two years:

1) A survey of demographic characteristics of existing programs.

2) A collection and annotation of reports on early childhood and related programs in Alaska, published prior to 1984.

3) Case studies of individual programs that would provide in-depth information on the operation of existing programs.

In the fall of 1984, a research proposal was drafted at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks for presentation to the State Department of Education. A second meeting of the August work group was held in November to consider the proposal. Although the proposal was included in the Department of Education's budget request that year, the project was not funded by the Legislature. Subsequently, however, the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and the University of Alaska-Juneau provided funding for two part-time graduate assistants, and Barbara Harrison (UAF) and Marjorie Fields (UAJ) agreed to begin a limited version of the project. The State Department of Education provided overall coordination of the statewide efforts, on-going communication with the original research group, travel funds for the case studies, and funding for the preparation of the final report. The University of Alaska-Fairbanks conducted the bibliographic search, the survey, and case studies of two programs. The University of Alaska-Juneau conducted case studies of two programs.

The purpose of this report is to provide the preliminary results of the first phase of the study and the survey. The bibliographic collection is available for those interested in early childhood policy within the state from the Department of Education in the State Library system. At the time of this writing, the case studies are still in preparation.

July 1986

PART I

The Survey

In the spring of 1985, Alaskan research efforts were focused on the bibliographic collection of early childhood materials from the widest field of sources available. In the summer of that year, work began on development of the demographic survey questionnaire. A draft of the questionnaire was prepared by Barbara Harrison and John Revells in Fairbanks. Copies of the draft were sent to members of the research work group for comment. We wanted to be certain that we were asking the questions which would provide the needed information to policy makers, and we wanted to be certain that the questions would be clear to those reading them. The questionnaire was revised on the basis of reviewers' comments and a second draft was circulated. After a third draft had been completed, the questionnaire was reviewed by teachers in early childhood programs in Fairbanks, and further revisions were made based upon their suggestions.

The final version of the questionnaire included structured response items and open-ended response items. The structured response items were designed for maximum efficiency in compiling responses, while the open-ended response items were designed to provide in-depth information on particular programs. A copy of the completed questionnaire is appended to this report.

In late November 1985, the questionnaire was sent to 261 certified preschool programs and licensed out-of-home child care centers in Alaska. A second mailing of the questionnaire was sent in March 1986 to programs that had not responded to the first mailing.

The Results of the Survey

This report, provides basic descriptive information based on the responses to the structured items in the questionnaire only, due to limited resources available to support analysis of the data. The original questionnaires have been sent to the Instructional Materials Center, at Department of Education, with the hope that resources will be allocated for further analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire.

Questionnaires were completed by individuals with varying roles in the programs. The positions of persons completing the questionnaires are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Position of person completing questionnaire.

	Childcare	Preschool	All
	Number of Programs		
Owner	9	5	30
Director	25	14	68
Teacher	0	20	24
Aide	1	4	6
Principal	0	3	4
Other	6	7	15
No response			5

* The total estimated population of 3-5 year old children in Alaska in 1985 was given by the Department of Labor

One hundred fifty-two programs responded to the questionnaire. These programs represented a capacity of 6,601 children and 1,093 staff members.* Forty-three of the programs were in rural villages, 103 were located in cities or in small communities with relatively easy access to urban centers, and 6 were unclassified as to location. Twenty-one school district programs were represented, as were six Montessori programs and six Head Start programs.

6.03 c/staff

Descriptive statistics for the structured response items are given in Tables 2-49. In these tables:

- "N" refers to the number of programs responding to the particular item;
- "Childcare" refers to those programs where the respondent classified the program as childcare;
- "Preschool" refers to those programs where the respondent classified the program as preschool;
- "All" includes childcare and preschool programs as well as programs classified as "Both" by respondents.
- "Sum" is the total number of individual response or entries counted in each category. Where percentages are given, they are based upon the number of programs in a particular category responding to the specific item.

Children's Backgrounds

Respondents from 145 programs reported that English was the primary language of the children in their programs. Twenty-three of the programs responding cited children whose primary language was Alaska Native, Spanish, Japanese, or another language other than English (see Table 2).

Table 2. What is the first (primary) language of the children in your program?

Language	Number of Programs
English	145
Alaskan Native	9
Spanish	4
Japanese	6
Other	4

Regarding the nature of the families of these Alaskan children, the Survey revealed that most children came from two parent households. Of these who came from single mother households, the highest number of children attended childcare programs (see Table 3). There were 773 children from single mother families in 44 childcare programs, and 147 children from single mother families in 43 preschool programs. Single mother households in both childcare and preschool programs were more common that single father households and more common than households where children moved between father and mother (see Tables 3, 4, and 5).

Table 3. How many of the children in your program are from single mother families?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	44	17.57	16.74	773	1 - 45
Preschool	43	3.42	4.20	147	0 - 20
All	126	11.16	14.17	1406	0 - 78

Table 4. How many of the children in your program are from single father families?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	44	1.14	1.70	50	1 - 7
Preschool	43	.67	2.36	29	1 - 15
All	126	1.40	3.00	176	1 - 27

Table 5. How many of the children in your program move between the homes of mother and father?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	44	2.23	4.56	98	0 - 30
Preschool	43	.81	1.83	35	0 - 10
All	126	3.11	13.69	392	0 - 150

The Programs

Of the programs responding, the average number of years of operation was just over eight years for the preschool programs and just over five years for the childcare programs (see Table 6). More than half the childcare programs had changed the program's name while a large majority of preschool programs had always operated under the present name (see Table 7).

Table 6. How many years has your program been operating?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	40	5.26	4.79	211	.7 - 20
Preschool	53	8.11	5.88	430	1 - 26
All	138	6.11	5.00	844	1 - 26

Table 7. Has it always operated under the present name?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	41	44	86	91	73
No	20	59	7	14	33	27

The average size in square feet of the childcare facilities was greater than the average for preschools (see Table 8), but it should be noted that the average capacity for the childcare programs was also greater than the average for the preschools (see Table 10). And, for both childcare programs and preschools, there were a number of one room facilities along with very large facilities.

Table 8. How large is your facility in square feet?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	26	2290.1	1414.43	59543	160 - 6000
Preschool	40	1652.8	1356.91	661121	120 - 6900
All	104	2484.6	2291.93	258397	120 - 14000

The largest percentage of programs responding were conducted in a facility other than a new building, a renovated building, a home, or a public school building (see Table 9). Some of these programs undoubtedly utilized church buildings. Approximately one-third of the childcare programs used renovated buildings, and approximately one-third of preschool programs used public school buildings.

Table 9. What kind of facility are you using?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
New building built as a preschool/childcare center?	6	15	3	5	23	15
Renovated building	13	33	5	9	36	23
Home?	4	10	4	7	14	9
Public school building?	4	10	20	35	29	18
Other	13	33	25	44	56	35

The total capacity of the 152 programs responding to the questionnaire was 6,601 children (see Table 10). The average capacity of the childcare programs was over 43 children, and the average capacity of the preschool programs was slightly less than 30 children, although programs ranged in capacity from 5 to 215 children.

Table 10. What is your certified/licensed capacity in number of students?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	45	43.47	26.88	1956	5 - 143
Preschool	47	29.87	25.86	1404	5 - 140
All	152	43.43	36.77	6601	5 - 215

Nearly half the programs reported that there was a waiting list for children to enter their programs (see Table 11). For those preschool programs with waiting lists, the average wait was over six months and for childcare programs with waiting lists the wait was reported as approximately four months (see Table 12).

Table 11. Is there a waiting list for your program?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	37	25	45	63	44
No	24	63	30	55	80	56

Table 12. What is the average wait (in weeks)?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	14	18.71	13.91	262	4 - 52
Preschool	18	27.78	20.92	500	4 - 52
All	49	23.92	17.83	1172	4 - 52

Children were accepted into the childcare programs at slightly earlier ages, on the average, than the age of children accepted into the preschool programs (see Table 13). Some programs of both types accepted children at the age of six weeks, but most preschool programs accepted children only after three years of age. Not surprisingly, the childcare programs continued to serve children primarily on a part-time basis for several years after the age when they would begin elementary school, while most preschool programs terminated services for children when the children reached the age of five, or elementary school age (see Table 14).

Table 13. At what age are children admitted into your program?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	40	2.17	1.98	87	6 wk/6 yr
Preschool	62	2.78	.67	173	6 wk/3.5 yr
All	146	2.24	1.37	326	6 wk/6 yr

Table 14. At what age do children exit from your program?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	40	9.45	3.53	378	3 - 18
Preschool	62	4.90	1.05	304	4 - 11
All	146	7.35	3.31	1074	3 - 18

The numbers of boys and girls served by each type of program are given in Tables 15 and 16.

Table 15. How many boys do you have in your program?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	44	20.57	11.96	905	3 - 52
Preschool	54	17.22	16.64	930	0 - 69
All	131	21.60	18.16	2830	0 - 1 19

Table 16. How many girls do you have in your program?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	44	18.40	11.23	810	1 - 41
Preschool	54	17.59	15.77	950	2 - 65
All	131	20.77	17.90	2721	2 - 128

Childcare programs operated, on the average, for about 2 months longer each year than the preschool programs with most childcare programs operating almost 12 months and most preschool programs operating 9 months (see Table 17).

Table 17. How many months of the year does your program operate?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	38	11.61	.97	441	9 - 12
Preschool	58	9.26	1.13	537	6 - 12
All	140	10.7	1.55	1498	6 - 12

The average number of days of operation per week was slightly greater for the childcare programs, with most of them operating five days a week (see Table 18). Eleven programs responding to the questionnaire were open six or seven days a week. The childcare programs also enrolled children for more hours each day with the average of the childcare children being approximately 7-1/2 hours each day and the average for the preschool children being less than 4 hours (see Table 19).

Table 18. How many days of the week do children attend?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	39	4.83	.59	189	2.5 - 5
Preschool	59	4.15	1.16	245	1 - 5
All	141	4.52	.94	638	1 - 7

Table 19. How many hours of the day are children enrolled?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	39	7.67	2.51	299	2.5 - 10
Preschool	58	3.73	3.22	217	1 - 10
All	143	6.03	3.10	862	1 - 10

Seventy-one child care/preschool or "all" programs enrolled children with special needs (see Table 20), but only 50 offered individualized activities for special needs children (see Table 21). In programs categorized as both childcare and preschool, there were more total programs with special needs children enrolled than there were programs that provided individualized activities for them.

Table 20. Do any children in your program have special needs?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	15	38	30	53	71	50
No	24	62	27	47	72	50

Table 21. Do you offer individualized activities for special needs children?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	45	23	55	50	46
No	17	55	19	45	58	54

Respondents from childcare programs reported meeting more frequently with parents, on the average, than respondents from preschool programs. There is some indication from the open-ended responses given to the survey that respondents from some of the childcare programs interpreted the question, as shown in Table 22, to include informal contact as well as formal meetings with parents.

Table 22. How many times each year do you meet with parents?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	19	10.37	15.27	197	0 - 52
Preschool	44	4.57	5.70	201	1 - 26
All	87	6.37	8.85	554	1 - 52

A large percentage of the programs reported that they publicly advertised their programs when the programs first started (see Table 23), and nearly half the programs continue to advertise (see Table 24). Nearly half the programs that do advertise use a combination of media for their advertisements (see Table 25).

Table 23. Did you advertise your program when first starting?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	31	82	47	77	119	83
No	7	18	14	23	25	17

Table 24. Do you advertise now?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	19	49	27	47	66	54
No	20	51	31	53	57	46

Table 25. If so, by what means?

	All N	All %
TV		
Radio	2	2
Newspaper	15	15
Other (Flyers, Bulletin Boards, Word of Mouth, etc.)	36	35
Combinations of TV/Radio/Newspaper/Other	49	48

A large proportion of the programs share information with other programs (see Table 26) with one-quarter to one-third of the programs that responded to this item reporting that they borrowed operating procedures, instructional methods, staff hiring procedures, and/or staff development procedures from other programs (see Table 27).

Table 26. Do you share information with other programs?

	Childcare N	Childcare %	Preschool N	Preschool %	All N	All %
Yes	30	91	44	90	106	91
No	3	9	5	10	11	9

Table 27. Did you use another program as a model for:

	Childcare N	Childcare %	Preschool N	Preschool %	All N	All %
Operating Procedures						
Yes	13	32	18	42	39	32
No	27	68	25	58	81	68
Instructional Methods						
Yes	19	49	17	40	42	36
No	20	51	26	60	76	64
Staff Hiring Procedures						
Yes	13	35	11	26	30	29
No	24	65	31	74	74	71
Staff Development Procedures						
Yes	9	24	12	29	31	27
No	28	76	30	71	84	73

A fairly small percentage of all programs reported that official contact with children is maintained once the children leave the program (see Table 28). A larger percentage of preschool programs than childcare programs reported maintaining contact.

Table 28. Do you have any official contact with children once they leave the program?

	Childcare N	Childcare %	Preschool N	Preschool %	All N	All %
Yes	3	8	14	27	23	18
No	34	92	37	73	104	82

Staff Members

One hundred fifty child care/preschool or "all" programs reported a total number of staff of 1,093 (see Table 29). The average number of staff members per program was greater for "all" or child care/preschool programs and for childcare programs than for preschool programs. The difference may reflect the larger average capacity for childcare programs, and the lower adult/child ratio required by the state Department of Health and Social Services for licensed programs for younger children. The number of staff members in any given program ranged from 1 to 64.

Table 29. How many members do you have on your staff?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	48	6.37	4.31	306	1 - 20
Preschool	57	4.19	3.72	239	1 - 19
All	150	7.29	8.47	1093	1 - 64

Respondents from child care/preschool programs categorized staff members as 437 teachers, 402 aides, 114 administrators, 124 volunteers, and 84 other (see Tables 30A-E). Since this totals to 1,161 individuals, some staff members were apparently included in more than one of the category counts. Presumably, some individuals perform duties associated with more than one role in particular programs. The fact that the average number of administrators per program is less than one for all types of programs suggests that, especially in the smaller programs, administrative duties are performed by teachers, aides, volunteers, or others. In addition, individuals whose primary role is administrative in larger programs often perform functions associated with other roles.

The average number of individuals in each category was higher for childcare and for "all" or child care/preschool programs than for preschool programs, with the exception of those staff members who were categorized as volunteers. Again, the difference may reflect the lower adult-child ratio required by law for child care programs.

Table 30. How many of these are:

A. Teachers

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	43	3.21	2.16	138	0 - 7
Preschool	53	1.54	1.24	82	1 - 6
All	150	2.92	2.91	437	0 - 15

B. Aides

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	43	2.23	3.20	96	0 - 12
Preschool	53	1.64	1.88	87	1 - 11
All	150	2.68	5.69	402	0 - 42

C. Administrators

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	43	.88	.76	38	0 - 2
Preschool	53	.43	.86	23	1 - 5
All	150	.76	1.01	114	0 - 6

D. Volunteers

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	43	.08	.26	4	0 - 1
Preschool	53	1.02	2.65	54	2 - 14
All	150	.82	2.91	124	0 - 20

E. Other

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	43	.53	.96	23	0 - 4
Preschool	53	.21	.53	11	1 - 3
All	150	.56	1.21	84	0 - 9

Additional items on the questionnaire asked for information on volunteers (see Tables 31 and 32A-C). The total number of volunteers reported in the additional items was greater than the total number of volunteers included in the first question about volunteer staff members. Apparently, those who were completing the questionnaires considered some volunteers to be staff members while other volunteers were not considered to be staff members. In cooperative programs where parents' work in the preschool center on a regular but infrequent basis, they were not generally viewed as staff members by respondents.

Approximately half of all programs reported using volunteers in their programs (see Table 31), but preschool programs reported having volunteers in their programs more frequently than did childcare programs. Preschool programs reported an average of nearly 15 parent volunteers per program, while the average number of volunteer parents in childcare programs was slightly less than 3 (see Table 32A). Students and other volunteers were also more common in preschool programs than in childcare programs (see Tables 32B-C), but the largest numbers of volunteers were parents. Parents, as volunteers, are also integral to the design of Head Start programs.

Table 31. Do you have volunteers helping with your program?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	15	39	36	63	70	53
No	23	61	21	37	61	47

Table 32. If so, how many?

A. Parents

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	6	3	2.61	18	0 - 8
Preschool	24	14.67	23.08	352	1 - 100
All	58	9.24	18.57	536	0 - 100

B. Students

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	4	2	.82	8	0 - 3
Preschool	10	4.2	8.55	42	1 - 27
All	58	1.17	4.19	68	0 - 27

C. Other

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	4	2	1.41	8	0 - 4
Preschool	9	2	2.74	18	1 - 9
All	58	.76	1.56	44	0 - 9

Responses to the questions regarding the educational backgrounds of staff members are displayed in Tables 33A-I. The sum of individuals in all categories is less than the total number of staff members reported in Table 29, so there were staff members who were not included in the responses to the questions on educational background.

A majority of staff members who were represented in responses to these question have formal education beyond the high school level. Of the 996 total staff members represented by responses to these questions, 617 have some college training, the AA degree, a Bachelor's degree, elementary or secondary certification, a Type E certificate, a Child Development Associate certificate, or graduate courses.

Although the general educational level of staff members was high, it is unknown whether the majority has substantial formal education specifically directed toward work in early childhood programs. Postsecondary coursework in early childhood education is offered only in limited locations in Alaska. Although staff members with college training of one kind or another may have had some coursework in early childhood education, the small numbers having Type E certificates (7) or Child Development Associate certificates (35) may indicate that few staff members have substantial formal education specifically relating to work in early childhood. Many respondents stated on their responses that they would like to have access to more college level and graduate training for themselves and other staff members. While there is no baccalaureate degree available in Alaska, many have brought this training background with them.

The proportion of staff members in the high school or GED level category is higher for childcare than for preschool programs. Because our purpose was to describe programs rather than comparing types of programs, we did not attempt to determine whether the differences in educational levels of staff members in the two types of programs were statistically significant.

Although there has been a trend in some rural school districts in Alaska to employ teachers with elementary certification for preschool programs, less than 10 percent of the staff members in programs responding to the questionnaire had elementary or secondary certification. Most programs did not employ teachers with any certification.

Table 33. What is the educational background of each staff member?

A. High school or GED

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	2.40	2.69	113	0 - 12
Preschool	58	.88	1.42	51	1 - 8
All	132	2.47	5.00	325	0 - 51

B. Some college training

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	2.05	1.58	96	0 - 7
Preschool	58	.72	1.39	42	1 - 7
All	132	1.98	2.82	261	0 - 20

C. AA Degree

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.23	.43	11	0 - 2
Preschool	58	.17	.38	10	1 - 1
All	132	.26	.52	34	0 - 3

D. Bachelor's Degree

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.62	.87	29	0 - 3
Preschool	58	.67	1.23	39	1 - 6
All	132	1.02	1.77	135	0 - 15

E. Elementary or Secondary Certification

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.68	.80	32	0 - 3
Preschool	58	.47	.80	27	1 - 4
All	132	.73	1.26	96	0 - 10

F. Type E Certificate

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.02	.15	1	0 - 1
Preschool	58	.03	.18	2	1 - 1
All	132	.05	.22	7	0 - 1

G. Child Development Associate Certificate

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.19	.58	9	0 - 3
Preschool	58	.22	.56	13	1 - 2
All	132	.27	.66	35	0 - 3

H. Graduate Courses

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.30	.46	14	0 - 2
Preschool	58	.33	.66	19	1 - 3
All	132	.37	.63	49	0 - 3

I. Other

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	47	.32	.69	15	0 - 2
Preschool	58	.33	.66	19	1 - 3
All	132	.41	.77	54	0 - 4

A total of 784 staff members are represented in responses to questions about the years of experience of staff members in early childhood programs (see Tables 34A-G). More than half (458) have 3 or fewer years of experience in early childhood programs.

More than half the staff members in programs categorized as preschool--113 out of a total of 182 staff members in 50 programs--had more than 3 years of experience. Less than half the staff members in programs categorized as childcare--71 out of a total of 196 staff members in 20 programs--had more than 3 years of experience. Again, because our purpose was to describe programs rather than comparing types of programs, we did not attempt to determine whether the differences in years of experiences of staff members in the two types of programs were statistically significant.

The average number of individuals in each category was greater for childcare programs than for preschool programs but this difference again may reflect the higher required staff to child ratios in child care programs.

Table 34. How many years of experience does each of your staff members have in early childhood education programs?

A. 1 year or less

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	1.83	2.38	64	0 - 8
Preschool	50	.62	1.01	31	1 - 4
All	125	1.68	3.21	210	0 - 28

210 - 784 = 26%

B. 1 - 2 years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	1.2	1.68	42	0 - 7
Preschool	50	.3	.76	15	1 - 4
All	125	1.10	1.84	138	0 - 13

C. 2 - 3 years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	.54	.82	19	0 - 3
Preschool	50	.46	.93	23	1 - 5
All	125	.88	1.75	110	0 - 12

D. 3 - 4 years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	.34	.68	12	0 - 3
Preschool	50	.26	.56	13	1 - 2
All	125	.54	1.14	68	0 - 9

E. 4 - 5 years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	.77	1.17	27	0 - 4
Preschool	50	.26	.63	13	1 - 3
All	125	.57	.99	71	0 - 5

F. 5 - 10 years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	.6	1.06	21	0 - 4
Preschool	50	1.08	1.81	54	1 - 10
All	125	1	1.73	125	0 - 10

G. 10 or more years

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	35	.31	.68	11	0 - 2
Preschool	50	.66	.80	33	1 - 3
All	125	.50	.78	62	0 - 3

Responses to the questionnaire suggest that program managers emphasize on-the-job training for staff members. Approximately two-thirds of all programs have a staff development plan to provide training (see Table 35). Childcare programs reported a greater average frequency of staff development activities than preschool programs (see Table 36), but there were some programs in each category providing weekly staff development activities.

Table 35. Do you have a staff development plan to provide training?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	21	54	34	65	90	69
No	18	46	18	35	40	31

Table 36. How many times per year do you have staff development activities?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	24	16.46	14.75	395	1 - 52
Preschool	31	8.77	12.38	272	1 - 52
All	74	15.69	17.56	1161	1 - 52

In addition, questionnaire respondents and other staff members attended workshops or other formal instruction during the year. One hundred twenty-four respondents reported attending (see Table 37), and 96 of those reported attending for an average of slightly over 30 hours each year (see Table 38).

Table 37. Do you attend any workshops or formal instruction on early childhood education or development?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	33	87	51	85	124	89
No	5	13	9	15	15	11

Table 38. If so, how many hours per year?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	28	25.36	19.86	710	5 - 80
Preschool	37	29.43	22.06	1080	3 - 100
All	96	30.36	27.11	2915	3 - 140

In programs of all types, high percentages of staff members attended workshops or formal instruction during the year (see Table 39). In 87 programs, staff members were reported to spend an average of 27 hours each year in workshops or formal instruction (see Table 40). Although the average number of hours reported for preschool programs was much higher than the average reported for childcare programs, two preschool programs, reporting 140 hours and 210 hours respectively each year, increased the overall average of the preschool programs.

Table 39. Does your staff attend any workshops or formal instruction on early childhood education or development?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	33	87	43	80	112	85
No	5	13	11	20	19	15

Table 40. If so, how many hours per year?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
Childcare	29	20.31	14.42	589	5 - 60
Preschool	31	35	43.28	1085	5 - 210
All	87	27.38	31.06	2382	5 - 210

Physical examinations were required as a condition of employment in more than half of all programs (see Table 41).

Table 41. Is a physical examination required as a condition of employment?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	18	47	43	74	83	60
No	20	53	15	26	55	40

Planned Activities

Over half the childcare programs and nearly all of the preschool programs responding to this item reported having written goals for their programs (see Table 42). The highest percentages of respondents reported that they decided on their present program based on experience (see Table 43) rather than other possibilities like training. In childcare programs, the second highest number of respondents reported that their present program activities had been seen in another program while in preschool and all programs the second highest number of respondents reported that their present program activities were decided on because of formal training.

Table 42. Are there written goals for your program?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	20	55	56	92	114	82
No	16	45	5	8	25	18

Table 43. How did you decide on your present program activities?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Based on experience	39	38	50	29	126	32
Formal training	18	17	41	24	96	24
Talking with consultant	13	13	18	11	49	12
Seen in another program	19	19	28	16	69	17
District curriculum	2	2	22	13	29	7
Other	11	11	12	7	32	8

Respondents reported formally reviewing their program an average of 11 times a year, with a few programs reviewing almost daily (see Table 44). Programs were also reported as changing or updating activities frequently (see Table 45). Nearly all programs reported having a daily schedule of activities (see Table 46).

Table 44. How many times per year do you formally review your program of activities?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
All	104	11.04	20.69	1148	1-3 times/wk

Table 45. How many times per year do you change or update your activities?

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum	Range
All	79	38.88	88.94	3072	1-daily

Table 46. Do you have a daily activity schedule?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	34	97	61	100	130	98
No	1	3	0		3	2

Approximately one-third of all programs involve parents in planning activities (see Table 47) with nearly the same percentages of childcare and preschool programs reporting parent involvement in planning.

Table 47. Are parents involved in planning activities?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	18	44	23	45	49	34
No	23	56	38	55	94	66

Respondents from 82 programs reported that there were areas of learning not adequately addressed due to limited financial resources (see Table 48). Approximately one-third to one-half of the 152 programs that responded to the questionnaire reported that there were areas of learning not adequately addressed due to limitations in number of staff, time, equipment, training, space, and/or money.

Table 48. Are there areas of learning not adequately addressed due to limitations such as:

	Childcare	Preschool	All
	N	N	N
Number of Staff			
Yes	16	20	54
No	0	1	1
Time			
Yes	14	30	54
No	0	1	1
Equipment			
Yes	16	14	44
No	4	1	1
Training			
Yes	16	16	46
No	0	1	1
Space			
Yes	20	21	59
No	0	1	1
Information about resources			
Yes	9	7	13
No	0	1	1
Money			
Yes	29	32	82
No	2	1	1
Other			
Yes	6	7	17
No	0	1	1

Respondents from 13 programs said that they did not know who to contact for questions concerning their program's management (see Table 49).

Table 49. Do you know who to contact for questions concerning your program's management?

	Childcare		Preschool		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	26	79	50	90	107	89
No	7	21	5	10	13	11

Conclusions

Flexible Policies for Diverse Programs

The most notable feature of early childhood programs in Alaska in 1985-86 was the diversity in the programs. Not only were there preschool and childcare programs and programs serving both functions, there were urban programs and rural programs all with children from a variety of different language and cultural groups. The size of the programs ranged from small programs with as few as five children and one staff member working in one room to large programs with as many as 215 children and 64 staff members working in a complex facility. Programs were operated by individuals, by school districts, by parent cooperatives, and by various grantee agencies administering Head Start programs. Statewide policies relating to early childhood programs need to be flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of programs found within the state.

Need for Additional Resources

The growing need for early childhood programs in Alaska has been documented by the Department of Community and Regional Affairs (1985). As noted in their 1985 report on child care programs:

> Alaska has the youngest population, the second highest birth rate, more women in the active labor force, and families having more babies than the nation as a whole (p. 20).

1987:
- highest b. rate
- higher fem. in labor force

The findings of the present survey confirm the need for additional early childhood programs in Alaska. Sixty-three of 152 programs that completed the questionnaire reported waiting lists. In some cases, the wait for particular programs was as long as a year, and the average wait for programs with waiting lists was six months for preschool programs and four months for childcare programs. In addition, over half the programs responding (82 programs) felt that they were not adequately addressing areas of learning because of limitations in funding, and approximately one-third of respondents felt they were not adequately addressing areas of learning because of limitations in number of staff, time, equipment, training, and/or space.

At the same time that Alaska's need for early childhood programs is increasing, oil revenues are declining, and funding from the federal government for early childhood programs is being cut. In this report, we have described not only the need for more early childhood programs but also the needs of existing programs. In spite of the present decline in oil revenues and federal funding, support must be provided to meet the needs of Alaska's parents and children in early childhood programs. The results of this survey indicate that, at the present time, funding is insufficient to meet those needs.

The survey questionnaire contained questions relating to costs and charges of the services offered by the programs. The numbers of responses to these questions were too low to allow for analysis primarily, we think, because the complex structure of funding from various state and federal agencies and individual parents made it difficult for any particular program to calculate per child costs.

Early Childhood Programs and Working Parents

Although there are exceptions to the "average" descriptions of childcare and preschool programs that emerged from this survey, the design of childcare programs appeared more likely to meet the needs of working parents than the design of preschool programs. Many childcare programs were open 12 months of the year, 10 hours each day, and for 5 days each week. Childcare programs accepted younger children and continued to enroll children after children entered elementary school.

Because many preschool programs operated nine month each year, less than five days a week, and an average of less than four hours each day, working parents who wanted to place a child in a preschool program probably located a childcare program to supplement the preschool program or they placed the child in a program offering both childcare and preschool services. More parents volunteered to assist in preschool programs than in childcare programs, suggesting that parents of children in preschools were more often available to help in the programs because they were not working.

It is therefore not surprising to find many more single mother households among childcare programs than among preschools when we know that "...60% of Alaska's single mothers who have children under six years of age are in the labor force (Department of Community and Regional Affairs 1985:1)."

On the average, the childcare programs had been in existence for shorter periods of time than the preschool programs. Because the number of working mothers has been steadily increasing in Alaska and because childcare programs are often designed specifically to meet the needs of working parents, it is likely that the number of childcare programs has been expanding more rapidly than the number of preschool programs.

Children with Special Needs

Parents of children with special needs were likely to have difficulty in finding appropriate placements for their children, particularly if the parents worked. Only about one-third of the programs responding to the questionnaire reported offering individualized activities for special needs children.

Staff Development

Because Alaska's institutions of higher education provide only limited programs in early childhood development in select regions of the state, early childhood program staff did not, in general, depend on these institutions to provide information or training. They were designing their own staff development and training activities to meet their individual needs. Nearly two-thirds of the 152 programs responding to the questionnaire had a staff development plan, and all but a few programs reported having staff members who attended workshops or formal instruction during the year. One of the major sources of information for program administrators was other programs. They shared information with each other and reported that their program designs were based upon experience and what they have seen in other programs in addition to formal training.

Even though program administrators were planning and designing their own staff development programs, they repeatedly and specifically requested additional offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels from Alaska's postsecondary institutions.

One advantage of the existing system of staff development is that individuals do not need to leave their jobs in order to receive full-time training at a college or university. Individuals who are parents themselves and who are members of a local community are receiving training as they work in preschools or childcare centers. This is an especially important advantage in programs for culturally diverse children because it allows adults from the local community with cultural backgrounds similar to those of the children to perform as teachers and caregivers for those children. Respondents to the questionnaire did indicate, however, that many of their staff members would be willing to enroll in formal coursework in early childhood development if courses were made available.

One difficulty with the present system of staff development is that staff members in the programs receive little institutional and professional recognition for the on-the-job training they acquire. One approach to addressing this problem would be to promote statewide policies which would give institutional recognition to the training the staff members are presently receiving.

Need for Follow-up Studies

Most programs responding to the questionnaire reported that they do not maintain contact with children after they leave the program. As a result, they are unable to attempt any kind of assessment of the long-term effects of their programs. Resources should be made available to promote for follow-up studies of children in varied settings so that program planners and policy makers can determine what the long-term effects of various approaches to early childhood programs are.

Programs with Questions

We recommend that the Department of Education contact the 13 respondents to the questionnaire who said they did not know who to contact with questions concerning their program's management. Those respondents should be provided with appropriate information.

Further Analysis of the Data

In closing, we would like to recommend that additional analysis of the data collected by this survey be undertaken by the Tri-Department Committee on Young Children. The descriptive analysis presented here should be only the first step. Those responding to the questionnaire answered questions about the type of activities offered in their programs, about the types of activities and the evaluation of staff development plans, about the types of background checks made on new hires, about program goals, and about problems their programs face. We hope to see a second report based upon the survey which will include a longer discussion of these items.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide whatever information you can. If you do not know the answer to a question or if the question does not apply to your program, you may leave it blank. If you need additional space to respond, please use the back of the page or attach an additional sheet.

Name of person completing questionnaire: _____
Position: _____
Length of time in current position: _____
Name of program: _____
Is your program a childcare _____ or preschool _____ or both _____
Mailing address: _____

CHILDREN'S BACKGROUNDS

What is the first (primary) language of the children in your program?

language	number of children
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How many of the children in your program are from one parent families?
single mother home_____ single father home_____
moves between homes of mother and father_____

THE PROGRAM

How many years has your program been operating? _____
Has it always operated under the present name? yes_____ no_____
If no, what was the previous name(s)? _____
How large is your facility in square feet? _____
What kind of facility are you using:
new building built as a preschool/childcare center?_____
renovated building? _____
home? _____
public school building? _____
other _____
What is your certified/licensed capacity in number of students? _____
Is there a waiting list for your program? yes_____ no_____
If so, how many are now on that list? _____
What is the average wait? _____
At what age are children admitted into your program? _____
What ages are served by your program? _____
What is the average length of time that a child remains in your program?
Hours per day _____ Number of days per week _____
Average length of total enrollment _____ years _____ months
How many boys _____ girls _____ do you have in your program?
What months of the year does your program operate? _____
What days of the week are you open? _____
What hours of the day are you open? _____
Do any children in your program have special needs? yes_____ no_____
If so, BRIEFLY describe the special needs.

Do you offer individualized activities for special needs children? yes__ no__
If so, BRIEFLY describe the activities.

How are parents involved with the program?

How often do you meet with parents? _____
For what purposes?

Did you advertise your program when first starting? yes_____ no_____
Do you advertise now? yes_____ no_____
If so, by what means? _____TV _____Radio _____Newspaper _____Other_____
Do you share information with other programs? yes_____ no_____
Did you use another program as a model for:

operating procedures	yes_____no_____	model used_____
instructional methods	yes_____no_____	model used_____
staff hiring procedures	yes_____no_____	model used_____
staff development procedures	yes_____no_____	model used_____

Do you charge for your program? yes_____no_____
If so, how much? (If there are different charges for different age groups, please specify.)
_____ daily
_____ weekly
_____ monthly
_____ after hours
Approximately, what is your per child cost? (If there are different costs for different age groups, please specifiy.) _____
_____
Do you have any official contact with children once they leave the program?
yes_____no_____
If so, BRIEFLY describe the contact:

STAFF MEMBERS

How many members do you have on your staff?_____
How many of these are:
teachers_____ aides_____ administrators_____ volunteers_____
other_____
What is the adult/child ratio? (If there are different ratios for different age groups, please specify.)_____
_____
How do you decide on specific assignments for each staff member?

What is the educational background of each staff member?

Number of staff whose highest educational level is:

_____ high school or GED
_____ some college training
_____ AA degree
_____ Bachelor's degree
_____ elementary or secondary certification
_____ type E certificate
_____ CDA certificate
_____ graduate courses
_____ other _____

How many years of experience does each of your staff members have in early childhood education programs?

_____ 1 year or less
_____ 1 - 2 years
_____ 2 - 3 years
_____ 3 - 4 years
_____ 4 - 5 years
_____ 5 - 10 years
_____ 10 or more years

What is the first (primary) language of each staff member?

language _____ number of staff_____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Do you have a staff development plan to provide training? yes_____ no_____
If so, how much does it cost to operate the staff training plan?_____
How often do you have staff training activities?_____
How do you evaluate the activities for effectiveness?

What type of background check is made on new hires?

_____

Is a physical examination required as a condition of employment? Yes__ No__
Do you attend any workshops or formal instruction on early childhood education or development? Yes__ No__

If so, total number of hours per year_____

Does your staff attend any workshops or formal instruction on early childhood education or development? Yes__ No__

If so, total number of hours per year/per person _____

Do you have volunteers helping with your program? Yes__ No__

If so, how many: _____parents
_____students
_____other_____

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Are there written goals for your program? Yes__ No__
Who developed the written goals?_____
What are the goals for your program?

How are the goals determined?

How did you decide on your present program activities?

_____ Based on experience
_____ Formal training
_____ Talking with a professional consultant
_____ Had seen them used in another program
_____ District curriculum
_____ Other_____

How often do you formally review your program of activities?_____
How often do you change or update your activities?_____
Do you have a daily activity schedule? Yes__ No__
If so, BRIEFLY describe your daily activity schedule

How and by whom is the daily activity schedule prepared?

Are parents involved in planning activities? Yes__ No__
If so, how are they involved?

What materials, either prepared by you and your staff or commercially developed, do you think are the most important materials for your program?

Is your program limited in what can be accomplished due to limitations such as:

_____number of staff
_____time
_____equipment
_____training
_____ space
_____ information about resources
_____ money
_____ other _____

Do you know who to contact for questions concerning your program's management? Yes__ No__

THE COMMUNITY

We realize that you may not know all of the answers to the following questions, but we would appreciate it if you would provide whatever information you can.

How many people live in your community?_____
What is the first language of most people in your community?_____
How many preschool/childcare programs are in your community?_____
How many children attend a preschool or childcare program in your community?_____
How long has the oldest preschool program in your community been operating?_____
What is the name of that program?_____

If you have time, please use the back of this page to describe the most important problems that your program faces.

Please return by December 20, 1985. Return to:

Early Childhood Program Study
College of Human and Rural Development
714C Gruening Bldg.
University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-0900

Reference

Department of Community and Regional Affairs. "Child Care Programs: Summary." December 1985.